

Patient information

Looking After Your Lungs

Name:

These exercises are beneficial following:

- Surgery
- Chest Infection
- Pneumonia
- And those less mobile / active

A physiotherapist will explain how to do these exercises, and advise you how often you should carry them out.

How your lungs work

When you are fit and well, tiny hairs (cilia) move in your airways (bronchi) to clear phlegm from your lungs. Phlegm is also cleared by taking deep breaths, which you naturally do when moving around.

Why you need breathing exercises

Not moving around as you normally would at home, allows phlegm to collect in your lungs. If phlegm is not cleared from your lungs it may cause a chest infection or pneumonia.

Following an operation your breathing will become shallower and your cilia do not clear phlegm as easily.

If you are a smoker you will have more phlegm, as smoke irritates the lungs and extra phlegm is produced to protect the lining.

If you are in pain, your breaths are more shallow and you cough to clear phlegm less frequently.

These exercises help you clear phlegm effectively and keep your lungs clear whilst in hospital.

Breathing exercises and advice

These exercises should be done sitting upright, unless otherwise advised by your physiotherapist.

The exercises may be difficult or painful, but are very important. If you have painkillers, taking them prior to these exercises may make them more comfortable.

1. Relaxed breathing. This helps to control your breathing.

- o Place your hands on your stomach
- o Take a gentle breath in; your hands will rise slightly
- o Relax, letting the breath out; your hands will fall
- o You should feel in control of your breath

2. Deep breathing exercises. These help to expand your lungs fully.

- o Place your hands on your stomach
- o Take a controlled deep breath in through your nose; your hands will rise on your stomach as you breathe in
- o If able hold this breath for a count of 2 - 3
- o Breathe out slowly through your mouth

3. Huffing / coughing. This will clear phlegm.

- o If you have a wound, support it with your hand, towel or pillow
- o Take a breath in, push out the air as quickly as possible, making a 'huff' sound at the back of the throat (like you are trying to steam up a mirror)
- o This may lead you to a cough, clearing your chest
- o Return to relaxed breathing

Complete this cycle _____ per _____

Circulation exercises and mobility

These exercises help prevent blood clots whilst in bed and also prevent muscles from weakening.

Exercising helps you to take deeper breaths that will also help to keep your lungs clear.

All these exercises can be done sitting in a chair or whilst in bed.

1. Ankles and toes - do these with both feet.

- Wiggle your toes
- Circle your ankles
- Point your toes away from you
- Pull your feet up towards you; you should feel a slight stretch in your calves.

2. Knees - complete these one leg at a time.

- Pull your knee into your chest
- Straighten your leg, pushing the back of your knee into the bed / chair – hold for a count of 5, relax gently.

3. Buttocks

- Squeeze your buttocks together – hold for a count of 5 and then relax.

Complete these exercises _____ per _____

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